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RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J5 SEOUL KOR
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SUBJECT: ROK READOUT OF UNSYG ANNAN'S VISIT

¶1. (SBU) On May 17, Oh Young-ju, MOFAT's Deputy Director for the UN Division, provided poloff with a brief readout of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's visit to Seoul. During his

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May 14-16 visit to the ROK, Annan met with President Roh, Foreign Minister Ban, and visited Seoul National University.

¶2. (SBU) Deputy Director Oh said that in his meeting with Foreign Minister Ban, UNSYG Annan raised several topics, including UN reform, developmental assistance, Iran, inter-Korean relations, North Korea, and ROK-Japanese relations. Ban stressed Seoul's support for UN reform, including the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, calling them positive steps toward making the UN more competent and more efficient. Ban also welcomed Annan's reform proposal called "Investing in the UN." Seoul planned to resolve its arrears to the UN by 2008, as well as double its overseas development aid to Africa by 2009. Annan replied that international health and humanitarian, as well as natural disaster relief efforts, required increased financial support from UN member countries, remarking that the increased ROK ODA was a "good step" for an emerging donor nation.

¶3. (SBU) Ban and Annan reiterated the need for a negotiated solution to the Iran and North Korean nuclear issues, with Annan specifically saying that the USG could play an important role in achieving peaceful resolutions. Annan also expressed an interest in inter-Korean developments, such as the announcement that the Koreas had agreed to trial runs on inter-Korean railways later in May. Despite the lack of progress in the Six Party Talks, the forum would be useful for reaching a diplomatic resolution to the North Korean nuclear issue. Asked about Annan's statement that the nuclear issue should take precedence over other issues with North Korea, Oh said Annan was simply responding to a reporter's question and that this was separate from the Ban-Annan meeting.

¶4. (SBU) Oh said that Annan raised the subject of Korean-Japanese relations in his meetings with Ban and President Roh. Ban and Roh provided detailed explanations of the historical aspects of the territorial dispute related to the Liancourt Rocks (Dokdo/Takeshima). Annan expressed hope for improved bilateral relations between Seoul and Tokyo that could strengthen prospects for a peaceful and professional understanding. Oh also confirmed press reports that Roh

actually drew a map of the Korean Peninsula and the disputed islets during the discussion to, as she noted, explain to an important international visitor the South Korean position on the issue. She opined that the President does not need much of an opening to show his interest in the topic.

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